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'Mobilized voting' versus 'performance voting' in electoral autocracies: Territorial variations in the levels of support for the systemic opposition parties in Russian municipalities

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ABSTRACT

The main task of authoritarian elections is to guarantee the survival of the regime. Achieving this goal, authoritarian rulers rely on authoritarian electoral mobilization that is employed by political machines, targeted mostly on poor and dependent voters. At the same time, since electoral autocracies permit opposition parties, those voters, who avoid mobilization, are able to make a choice between the government and the opposition. If they are dissatisfied by their personal or social conditions, they are liable to engage in 'performance voting' and give their support to the opposition. In this article, we examine how the two logics of 'mobilized voting' and 'performance voting' relate to each other. The study is based on a large-N analysis of local level variations in the electoral support of Russia's three systemic opposition parties in 2016 Duma elections, and a unique dataset comprised of electoral and social-economic data, from local (municipal) units.

KEYWORDS Electoral authoritarianism; opposition; Russia; municipalities; mobilized and performance voting

The main task of authoritarian elections is to guarantee the survival of the regime. Achieving this goal, authoritarian rulers rely on authoritarian electoral mobilization that is employed by political machines (Stokes 2005; Golosov 2013). One of the main target groups for political machines, are poor and deprived areas, as poverty increases the demand for clientelistic exchange and direct vote-buying. As a result, opposition parties perform better in the territories with less favourable conditions for machine mobilization, such as

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in urban and wealthy areas with more educated populations (White 2020). However, not all people are subjected to authoritarian mobilization. Since electoral autocracies permit opposition parties, those voters, who are outside the targeted mobilization groups, or who can avoid mobilization, are able to make a choice between the government and the opposition. Regardless of whether they do it rationally or expressively, voters blame the incumbent party if they are dissatisfied by their personal or social situation. They engage in 'performance voting' and give their support to the opposition (Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci 2013). Consequently, from the perspective of 'performance voting', we can expect that the areas with an economic downturn are more likely to vote for the opposition parties. However, it remains unclear how the two logics of 'mobilized' and 'performance' voting relate to each other, thus a key aim of this research is to solve this puzzle.

In this study we examine local variations in electoral support for the opposition in the Russian Duma elections of 2016. In Russia, there exist three systemic opposition parties – The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), and Just Russia (JR). All of these parties are 'effectively controlled by the Kremlin and incorporated into the formal and informal hierarchy of the Russia's government' (Gel'man 2008, 913), thus we might expect to find little policy differences between them. Nonetheless, these parties have different historical roots and trajectories, and it is possible to expect that the voters do not perceive them as being identical. Consequently, the other puzzle of this study concerns the extent to which these perceptions translate into territorial variations in electoral support for each of these parties.

Whilst there have been a large number of studies of the Kremlin's party of power, United Russia (UR) (Reisinger and Moraski 2009, 2010; Panov and Ross 2013; Panov and Ross, 2019; White 2015, 2016; Saikkonen 2016; Ross and Panov 2019), and White (2020) has provided an excellent account of the territorial support for the CPRF, there have been no studies which have conducted a comparative analysis of all three systemic opposition parties.

In this article, we seek to answer the questions using a unique dataset comprising electoral and social-economic data, from local (municipal) units. The local level provides more disaggregated data than the regional level data, and it also substantially increases the number of observations, which has undoubted advantages in large-N studies. Despite the fact, that collecting local-level data in Russia is more problematic, a number of scholars have successfully overcome such difficulties, in studies of authoritarian mobilization (Saikkonen 2017), ethnic representation in the Duma (Goodnow and Moser 2012; White and Saikkonen 2016), the scope of electoral manipulation (Goodnow, Moser, and Smith 2014; Moser and White 2017; Saikkonen and White 2021), and, as noted above, the electoral performance of the CPRF (White 2020). Our dataset, however, differs from previous studies, as it uses

the most recent 2010 All-Russian Population Census, and the latest social and economic data extracted from the Database of Indicators of Municipalities, available on the Rosstat web-site (*Federal State Statistic Service, rosstat.gov.ru*).

Local-level analysis allows us to highlight the differences in voting for the three systemic opposition parties and to expose how the two different logics of voting relate to each other. Our study confirms statistically that in general, rural and relatively poor areas with a higher proportion of non-Russians, give support to the party of power, United Russia, which fully corresponds with the authoritarian mobilization logic. However, when we examine the opposition parties individually, we find substantial differences in their support, depending on the ethnic composition and the standard of living of the territorial units. In particular, poorer areas tend to vote for the CPRF (but not for the LDPR and JR); and a low share of non-Russians in a territorial unit benefits the LDPR (but the CPRF and JR). Consequently, we find that both logics of voting matter and complement each other.

The structure of our article is as follows. We begin with a brief review of the main theoretical points important for the study of elections and opposition parties in authoritarian regimes and apply them to Russia. Based on this discussion, we propose two set of hypotheses regarding voting for the systemic opposition parties in general and for each party individually. This is followed by a detailed account of the variables, indicators, and empirical data employed in the study. Then we test our hypotheses with the empirical data from the 2016 Duma elections and present the results. The conclusion summarizes the study's main findings.

Elections and opposition parties in authoritarian regimes

Recent research has stressed that elections and partisan legislatures play a major positive role in stabilizing and bolstering autocracies. Electoral authoritarian regimes, such as Russia, which sanction the creation of multi-party legislatures have been shown to be more stable and long lasting than regimes which seek to rule through naked suppression (Levitsky and Way 2002; Schedler 2006). Competitive elections in autocracies legitimate the system, manage intra-elite conflicts, divide the opposition into systemic and non-systemic components, and co-opt the former (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009; Ross 2018; Armstrong, Reuter, and Robertson 2020).

The main task of authoritarian elections is to guarantee the victory of the ruling party, and the survival of the regime (Simpser 2013). Consequently, authoritarian rulers rely on non-ideological and non-policy electoral mobilization (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Such mobilization ('mobilized voting') is employed by political machines (Stokes 2005; Golosov 2013). They use numerous instruments aimed at ensuring the victory of an incumbent, on a non-ideological / non-policy basis. The range of their activities includes

clientelist exchanges, vote-buying, administrative pressure on voters, and so forth (Stokes et al. 2013; Frye, Reuter, and Szakonyi 2019; Hicken and Nathan 2020). Direct mobilization activity takes place at the lower levels, and it is well known that lower authorities and lower-ranking officials are held directly responsible to higher level officials, for the election results in their constituencies (Ross 2007).

It has been argued that poor citizens are one of the most important target groups for authoritarian mobilization (Magaloni 2006; Jensen and Justesen 2014; Frantz 2018). On the one hand, low-income people are more prone to accept 'awards in kind' for their loyal voting. On the other hand, poor people are more dependent on their 'supervisors' (bosses, patrons, employers, etc.) and are more vulnerable to administrative pressure. Moreover, the level of poverty matters, not only from the view of individual voters, but also from the perspective of the territorial units. Relatively poor areas are more susceptible to political pressure which benefits the electoral support of UR. In contrast, as White (2020, 393), 4) notes, 'wealthier areas should lean toward opposition parties because the local population should be less dependent on goods distributed by the regime'.

At the same time, electoral authoritarian regimes permit opposition parties to operate, provided that they do not threaten the survival of the regime. Those voters, who are outside the targeted mobilization groups, or who can avoid mobilization, are able to choose between the incumbent 'party of power' (UR), and the opposition. Consequently, in this case, we can expect to find examples of 'performance voting'. In those territorial units, where people are dissatisfied by their current situation, they tend to vote for the opposition parties to a greater extent. In other words, they blame the party when things go wrong (Sirotkina and Zavadskaya 2020). 'This follows the classic tradition of democratic theory, which understands elections as a sanctioning device in which voters reward or punish incumbents on the basis of past performance' (Hobolt, Tilley, and Banducci 2013, 116). Voters are more likely to 'throw the rascals out' when economic conditions are getting worse and support them when times are good (Ibid). Strictly speaking, performance voting concerns rational evaluation of past policy performance, but many dissatisfied people will blame the government and vote for the opposition expressively, and in large-N quantitative analyses, it is not possible to distinguish rational and expressive motivations. Therefore, in this study we include expressive voting, under the general category of 'performance voting'.

Also, citizens can vote for the opposition on the basis of their values and ideological orientations ('ideological voting'). Thus, for example, the values of human rights and democracy can motivate voting against the party of power, regardless of personal and socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, some people make their decisions based on their attachment to a political party

or specific party candidates ('party identification voting'), though in Russia, the number of 'core voters' is unlikely to be large, as it is argued that the Russian party system is not a product of strong social cleavages (Hale 2006).¹

In this study, we focus on the two contradictory forms of 'mobilized' and 'performance' voting, and we test the following competing hypothesis concerning voting for opposition parties, as a whole.

H 1.1.1: The low level of well-being in a unit favours administrative mobilization and impacts on the voting for opposition parties negatively.

H 1.1.2: The low level of well-being in a unit results in dissatisfaction with the incumbent and impacts on the voting for opposition parties positively.

H 1.2.1.: Bad economic conditions in a unit increases poverty and impacts on the voting for opposition parties negatively.

H 1.2.2: Bad economic conditions in a unit results in dissatisfaction with the incumbent and impacts on the voting for opposition parties positively.

Furthermore, as has been demonstrated in previous studies, the effectiveness of political machines, which employ authoritarian mobilization, is facilitated by strong social networks, such as rural and ethnic networks, which enable the regime to distribute awards in return for loyal voting, monitor possible defections, put pressure on voters from their social environment, and so forth. For that reason, regions with a higher share of non-Russians and rural inhabitants, are more susceptible to regime mobilization and pressure (Hale 2003; White 2015; Panov and Ross 2016; Frantz 2018). Consequently, we would expect the following:

H 1.3: The share of rural dwellers in a unit impacts on the share of votes for opposition parties negatively.

H 1.4: The share of non-Russians in a unit impacts on the share of votes for opposition parties negatively.

The systemic opposition parties in Russia

The systemic opposition parties – the CPRF, LDPR, and JR – face a dilemma, as they are often torn between their role as professed opponents of the regime, whilst at the same time having to continually demonstrate their loyalty to the Kremlin. If they are too loyal and acquiescent and make too many compromises with the government, they risk weakening their electoral base and losing the support of their rank-and-file members, but if they are too radical in their opposition, they may be denied participation in the elections and lose their spoils and privileges. Overall, all three of the systemic opposition parties may be defined as 'parastatal' parties, which largely operate under the control of the Kremlin (March 2012, 251), and 'pillars' of the

regime (Dollbaum 2017, 109). As Hutcheson and McAllister (2017, 477) note, UR and the three opposition parties do not provide a full spectrum of policy options.

They form a “cartel” that has very few real policy differences. As such, voters casting their vote for one of these four parties were effectively choosing between four within-system options with different emphases – like choosing between shades of grey, rather than between black and white.

At the same time, according to Gel'man (2015, 177), in addition to ‘being harshly coerced by the authorities’, the Russian systemic opposition has ‘been bitterly divided by internal contradictions, thus opening doors for the Kremlin’s divide-and-rule tactics’. The leaders of the three systemic parties have devoted much of their energies in the parliament to attacking each other, rather than holding UR to account. Furthermore, there are some important differences between these parties, first of all, in their origins and trajectory of development.

The Communist Party is by far the largest of the three systemic opposition parties (163,247 members on 1 Jan 2018). Being the CPSU successor party, it inherited the strongest grassroots organization. The party participates in elections at all levels of the political system and in some regions, it shares important legislative positions with UR. It has held seats in all 7 Duma’s, winning 42 seats in 2016, and it came second to United Russia in 34 of Russia’s 85 regions.

The LDPR, on the contrary, was created in the era of perestroika. In the very first Duma elections in 1993 the party gained first place with 23% of the votes but since then its electoral support has ranged from 5% to 15%. Alongside the CPRF, it has held seats in all 7 Dumas, and it won 39 seats in the latest elections in 2016. Compared to 2011, its electoral results in 2016 improved markedly in all but 14 regions, and it came second to United Russia in 39 regions.

Just Russia was created out of the merger of three other parties in 2006 (the national-populist Rodina, the left-leaning Pensioner’s Party and the centrist Party of Life, with the addition of the People’s Party in 2007), and it has held seats in the Duma since 2007. It is a spoiler party created by the Kremlin to steal votes from both the Communists and the LDPR. However, in contrast to CPRF, some leaders of Just Russia gave their support to the mass protest movement in 2011 and 2012. For that reason, the party came under extreme pressure from the Kremlin, and suffered ‘multiple splits and defections of sponsors’ (March 2015, 105). The dissident members were expelled, and Mironov the head of the party, was forced to denounce the opposition movement, and later he was removed from his post as chair of the Federation Council. In 2016, JR gained 23 Duma seats. However, in 36 regions it gained less than 5% of votes, and it took second place in only five regions.

All three opposition parties, if they want to maintain their seats in the Duma, have to support the status quo, and generally toe the Kremlin line.

However, the differences in their origin and trajectory, has had an influence on the perceptions of these parties in the mass consciousness. According to the 2012 Russian Election Studies Survey, voters view, 'United Russia, as primarily a right-oriented party, counterpoised to the CPRF's leftism, with the other two main parties falling more in the centre' (Colton and Hale 2014, 13). On economic policy, the CPRF, is seen 'as devoted to a return to socialism' whilst the policies of JR and LDPR 'were less clear to voters' (Ibid). The Survey also revealed differing perceptions on the parties' stance on foreign policy. Thus, United Russia 'was identified with treating the West as an ally while the CPRF and the LDPR were seen, as believing the West is mainly a rival or enemy' (Ibid). Undoubtedly, since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Russian political landscape has changed; and all the systemic parties have taken anti-Western positions. Nevertheless, we can expect that the general views of the opposition parties which were expressed in the Russian Election Studies Survey remain salient. Thus, the Communist Party is still viewed as the most dissident and leftist of the three opposition parties. The LDPR is ostensibly an ultra-right-wing party which disavows 'both economic liberalism and communism', and Just Russia 'is ostensibly a left of centre party and is perceived as the most systemic of the opposition parties' (Reuter 2019).

Thus, we can expect that those members of the electorate who vote against UR, make a choice based on these ordinal views.² Since the CPRF is conceived as a left-wing party, we would expect that it should be supported to a greater extent in less wealthy areas. The LDPR, on the contrary, criticizes Soviet rule; and the main focus of its rhetoric is the promotion of 'Russianness' in an ethnic sense. Therefore, we would expect that the party will be more popular in territories with less share of non-Russians. Concerning JR, our expectations are much less clear. As the party occupies a centre-left position, and it stresses issues of social justice, the poorer members of electorate are likely to sympathize with it, but it is constrained by the fact that, in contrast to the CPRF and the LDPR, it is perceived as a party which was artificially created by the Kremlin. However, as noted above, some leaders of JR participated in the 2011–12 protest movement in large cities. For these reasons, it might be expected that JR is supported to a greater extent in urban areas.

Consequently, the second set of hypotheses is as follow:

H 2.1: The low level of well-being in a unit impacts on the share of votes for the CPRF positively.

H 2.2: The high share of non-Russians in a unit impacts on the share of votes for the LDPR negatively.

H 2.3: The high share of rural dwellers in a unit impacts on the share of votes for JR negatively.

Variables, indicators, data

Our dependent variables are the election results of the three opposition parties taken together, and separately (percentage of votes), in the 2016 Duma election, in the municipalities that are the units of observation in this study. Local-level data provides us with more disaggregated data and enables us to generate more nuanced findings by increasing the number of observations, and it also helps us to uncover some of the patterns that may be hidden in the regional level data. We take the party list results of the three parties in total, and also the individual results for each party. The focus of our study is the 2016 Duma elections, which are the most recent parliamentary elections. These elections took place in a fairly stable political environment, and were conducted not long after the 2014 annexation of Crimea, that consolidated the regime around the Kremlin. In this sense, 2016 is more appropriate for the study than, for instance, the 2011 Duma elections which were held at a time of economic decline and rising political dissatisfaction with the government, which resulted in protest voting, and the rise of a mass opposition movement against the regime.

We use the official elections results³ of the 'upper tier' of the municipal units – the municipal districts and city okrugs.⁴ Since Moscow and St. Petersburg have special structures of local government, they are not included in the analysis; Crimea and Sevastopol are also excluded, due to the very specific political situation which pertains in these regions, after their accession to Russia. In total, with the exception of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Crimea, and Sevastopol, we have 2326 local-level units of observation.

The list of independent variables follows from our hypothesis. The share of non-Russians in the administrative units is taken from the official data of the latest All-Russian Population Census (2010), and all other social and economic variables are extracted from the Database of Indicators of Municipalities, available on the Federal State Statistic Service (Rosstat) web-site. The share of rural dwellers in a unit is calculated in percentages. For the measurement of economic conditions in municipalities, we use the dynamics of the average annual number of employees in a municipal unit. We count the percentage growth in the number of employers in 2016 in comparison to 2013. Whereas the positive values of this variable, indicates a positive trend in the unit's economy, negative values point to poor economic dynamics. The level of well-being in a unit is measured using the average monthly salary in a municipality. However, since the regions of the Russian Federation vary greatly in commodity prices, the absolute value of the average monthly salary is not a valid indicator, therefore, we weight it by the average monthly salary in the respective regions and present it in percentages. A weighted value of more than 100% indicates that a unit is wealthier relative to its region; and a value less than 100%, on the contrary, indicates

poorer municipal units. The information about the variables, indicators, and sources is summarized in [Table 1](#).

It is important to stress, that local-level electoral and social-economic statistics are not always consistent. On the one hand, the data presented on the Central Electoral Commission's website, contains the elections results at the level of the territorial election commissions (TECs). Usually, the boundaries of the TECs coincide with municipal districts and city okrugs. However, in large cities (as a rule, in regional centres) some TECs are created, therefore we summarize the election results in these TECs. In very small local units (6 cases), on the contrary, TECs are not created (these units are attached to the TECs of other local units), for that reason these units are excluded from the analysis.

On the other hand, there are some problems with the quality of local social / economic statistics. For instance, in Russia there are approximately 40 so called 'closed municipal units' which are absent in the official statistics. Additionally, there are some gaps and unreliable information in the Database of Indicators of Municipalities, therefore we have to exclude some regions from the analysis (Buryatia, Ingushetia, and Mordovia). Also, as we use multi-level regression analysis, three regions were excluded due to the small number of municipal units (Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Jewish Autonomous Oblast', Chukotka). As a result, the number of local units available for the analysis is reduced to 2209 observations in 75 regions.

Table 1. Variables, indicators and sources.

Variables	Indicator	Sources
The election results	Percentage of votes for opposition parties in total, and individually	The Russian Central Electoral Commission Website (http://www.cikf.ru).
Non-Russians	The share of non-Russians in the population (2010, in per cent).	Collected and calculated by the authors on the basis of the data of the All-Russian Population Census 2010. (web-sites of the regional branches of the Federal State Statistic Service)
Rural	The share of the rural population (2016, in per cent)	Calculated by the authors on the basis of: The Database of Indicators of Municipalities (https://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/bd_munst/munst.htm)
Salary	The average monthly salary in a municipal unit divided by the average monthly salary in the region	Calculated by the authors on the basis of: Regiony Rossii: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie Pokazateli 2019 (Moskva: Rosstat, 2019). Tables 4.5. The Database of Indicators of Municipalities (https://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/bd_munst/munst.htm)
Employment	The percentage growth in the number of employers in 2016 in comparison to 2013	Calculated by the authors on the basis of: The Database of Indicators of Municipalities (https://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/bd_munst/munst.htm)

Table 2. Descriptive statistics ($N = 2209$).

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Variance	Standard deviation
Opposition results	34.34	0.14	60.77	150.79	12.28
CPRF results	13.83	0.00	36.61	31.95	5.65
LDPR results	15.17	0.00	38.09	54.16	7.36
JR results	5.34	0.00	30.75	18.60	4.31
Non-Russians	22.65	0.62	99.99	829.64	28.80
Rural dwellers	56.93	0.00	100.00	1376.97	37.11
Salary	90.75	54.08	224.23	439.06	20.95
Employment	-9.01	-53.32	106.70	159.37	12.62

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 illustrate how great the differences are between municipalities, both in terms of their socio-economic indicators and voting patterns. The range of the values for the election results of the opposition parties is more than 60% at the local level. However, if we take individual opposition parties, the range is smaller, but it varies for the different opposition parties, and it is closely tied to the overall nationwide results of the parties. The CPRF and the LDPR, which won approximately 13% of the votes, have the range 36% and 38% respectively. It is noteworthy, that support for the LDPR is distributed more unevenly across the territory than are the votes of the CPRF: the value of variance reaches 54%, while the variance of the CPRF is only 32%. JR which won 6.2% of the votes demonstrates a smaller range and variance. Nevertheless, one can see that they are fairly popular in a number of individual municipalities; the maximum values of JR are just under 30% (in Viluyskiy district in Yakutia and Kamenskiy district in Altay kray).

The descriptive statistics also show huge variations in the social and economic indicators across the municipalities. The variations in the share of the rural population are evident, due to the fact that there are both city okrugs and rural districts in our sample; and variations in the share of non-Russians are well-known, however such great variations in the values of economic indicators are particularly noteworthy. In some municipal units (Kansk municipal district in Krasnoyarskiy kray; Kudymkarsky municipal district in Permskiy kray, etc.) the average monthly salary is almost two times lower than in the respective region, whereas in 7 units, on the contrary, is more than two times higher (Lobnya in Moskovskaya oblast', Novaya Zemlya district in Archangelskaya oblast', etc.). As for employment growth, the value of the mean is negative (-9.01), which indicates rather poor economic performance on average, especially due to the fact, that the values of the standard deviation are fairly low (12.62). In other words, in the whole country the level of employment in 2016 decreased relative to 2013. However, we find more than 340 municipalities that demonstrate a growth in employment, including such cases as Novaya Zemlya in Archangelsk oblast', Selemdzhinskii district in Amur oblast', etc., where employment has doubled in recent years.

Analysis and results

We need to employ multi-level regression, not simple OLS, since the data are hierarchical (municipalities as the level 1, nested within regions as the level 2) which violates the assumption of residuals independency. For the four dependent variables (the three opposition parties overall – OPP, and separately – LD, CP, JR), we develop models with random intercepts, which allow us to model the nested data more precisely. Using random intercepts allows us to define to what extent the intercepts vary across regional units. The results are presented in Table 3.

In general, we find evidence in favour of both logics of voting – ‘authoritarian mobilization’ and ‘performance voting’. Thus, in all the models, ‘Employment’ has negative and statistically significant coefficients, consequently, relatively good economic performance in a unit is unfavourable for the opposition parties. On the contrary, a 1% decrease in the number of employees in 2016 from those in 2013 leads to an increase in voting for the opposition by 0.05%. Here, we have an example of ‘performance voting’, i.e. voters are prone to blame the party of power for economic decline. Thus, of the two competing hypotheses, hypothesis H 1.2.2 is confirmed.

At the same time, in the OPP model, ‘Salary’ has a positive coefficient. At the first glance, this is rather in line with the ‘authoritarian logic’: wealthier units are more prone to vote for the opposition as they are less vulnerable to administrative mobilization. However, the coefficients have a statistical

Table 3. Multi-level regression models with random intercepts (between regions) ($N = 2209$).

	Dependent variable:			
	OPP (1)	LD (2)	CP (3)	JR (4)
Non-Russians	−0.093*** (0.010)	−0.100*** (0.006)	−0.009 (0.006)	0.013*** (0.004)
Rural dwellers	−0.062*** (0.004)	−0.010*** (0.002)	−0.025*** (0.003)	−0.027*** (0.002)
Salary	0.007 (0.007)	0.006 (0.004)	−0.014*** (0.004)	0.015*** (0.003)
Employment	−0.049*** (0.011)	−0.012* (0.006)	−0.023*** (0.007)	−0.016*** (0.005)
Constant	38.588*** (1.322)	17.369*** (0.781)	16.442*** (0.729)	4.828*** (0.516)
Random Effects				
σ^2	30.56	11.32	13.46	6.59
τ_{00}	84.13	25.36	19.34	9.91
ICC	0.73	0.71	0.59	0.60
Observations	2209	2209	2209	2209
Log Likelihood	−7085.143	−5987.117	−6158.109	−5372.936
Akaike Inf. Crit.	14,184.290	11,988.230	12,330.220	10,759.870
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	14,224.190	12,028.140	12,370.120	10,799.770
Marginal R^2 / Conditional R^2	0.126 / 0.767	0.187 / 0.765	0.030 / 0.602	0.071 / 0.629

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

significance neither in the OPP, nor in the LDPR model. Only Just Russia benefits in the better-of units. Moreover, in the CPRF model, 'Salary' has a negative and statistically significant coefficient. If the average salary in the municipality exceeds the average salary in the region by 1%, it reduces voting for the CPRF by 0.014%. Consequently, here we have a much more captivating picture, that reconciles both of the competing hypotheses H 1.1.1 and H 1.1.2. On the one hand, a lower level of well-being in a unit facilitates authoritarian mobilization and voting for the party of power, whilst a higher level of well-being, on the contrary, favours the opposition (voting for JR), as hypothesis H 1.1.1 posits. On the other hand, we find that those poor people, who evade administrative pressure, express their dissatisfaction by voting for the opposition (H 1.1.2), however not the opposition in general, but specifically the CPRF.

Nevertheless, the 'authoritarian logic of voting' is clearly found in two of the other variables. Here we almost fully confirm the hypotheses H 1.3 and H 1.4. As was expected, 'Rural dwellers' has negative and statistically significant coefficients in all the models. The growth of the share of rural population in a unit by 1% reduces voting for the opposition by 0.06%. The share on 'Non-Russians' has an even more significant negative impact – 0.09%. However, in contrast to the situation in rural areas, the influence of ethnicity is not uniform among the different systemic opposition parties. A higher share of ethnic minorities in the population impacts negatively on voting only for the LDPR, whereas in the JR model, it has a positive coefficient, and in the CPRF model the coefficient is not significant.

Consequently, we find significant differences in voting for the three systemic opposition parties. This finding confirms hypothesis H 2.1 that a low level of well-being in a unit favours the CPRF. It is the only systemic opposition party which has electoral benefits from relatively poor people, as it is still perceived as the most important left-wing party in Russia. Hypothesis 2.2 is also confirmed. The LDPR as a right-wing party, is the only systemic opposition party which is clearly associated with 'Russianess', and one can see that increasing the share of non-Russians by 1% reduces support for the LDPR by 0.1%. On the contrary, Hypothesis 2.3 has not been fully confirmed. Although high shares of rural dwellers in a unit impacts negatively on voting for JR, we find the same for all the other systemic opposition parties. At the same time, in comparison with the LDPR and CPRF, JR has more support in the wealthier units. Although indirectly it may be linked with the urban population, it is insufficient to confirm Hypothesis 2.3. Additionally, in contract to other systemic opposition parties, the share of non-Russians has a positive influence on voting for JR. In this sense JR is closer to UR. One of the reasons for this is the origins of JR. In the late 2000s, when JR was perceived as the second party of power, fairly strong regional branches were established in some regions, including the ethnic republics (Yakutia, Chuvashiya), and they have remained in place.

Furthermore, it has to be stressed that all the models demonstrate that Russian regions do indeed vary greatly in their voting. The high values of the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) in all the models, means that the regions account for 73% of the variability of voting for the systemic opposition in general, and 60–70% of the variability of the voting for the separate parties. Cross-regional differences are clearly brought out in Figures 1–4, which are based on the respective multi-level models and indicate individual intercepts for the regions with 95% confidence intervals.

The analysis of these plots uncovers some interesting findings. In general, a majority of the regions show similar results of voting for the parties (the middle part of the plots, that is the range from approximately '–5' to '+5' in the region-level intercepts), however in all the plots, there are two groups of regions which deviate from the middle significantly, to the left

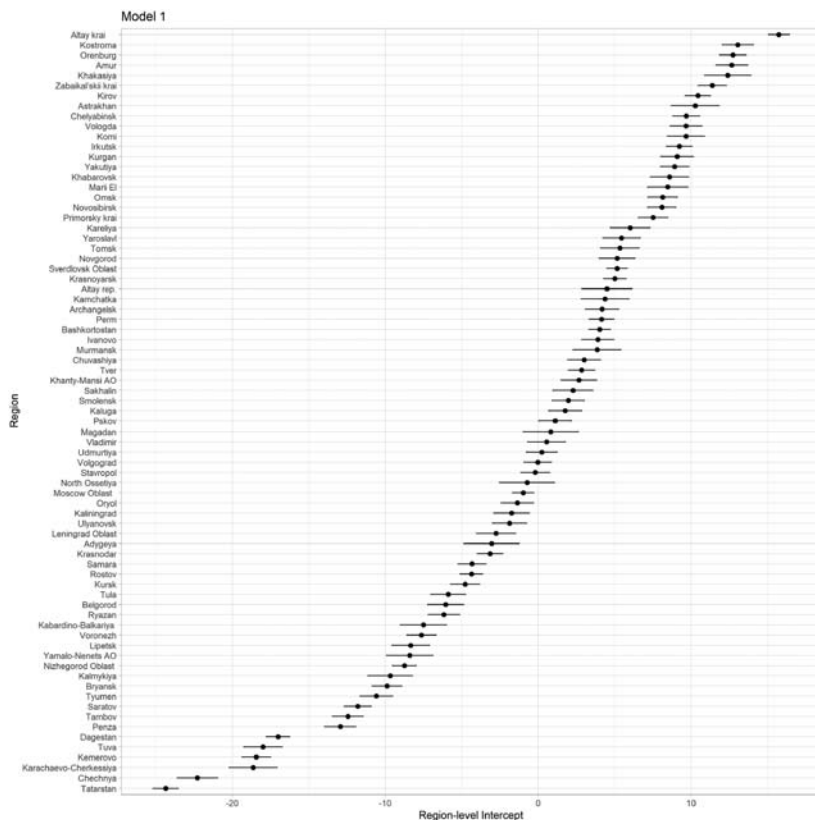


Figure 1. Voting for all three systemic opposition parties (OPP): individual intercepts for the separate regions with 95% confidence intervals.

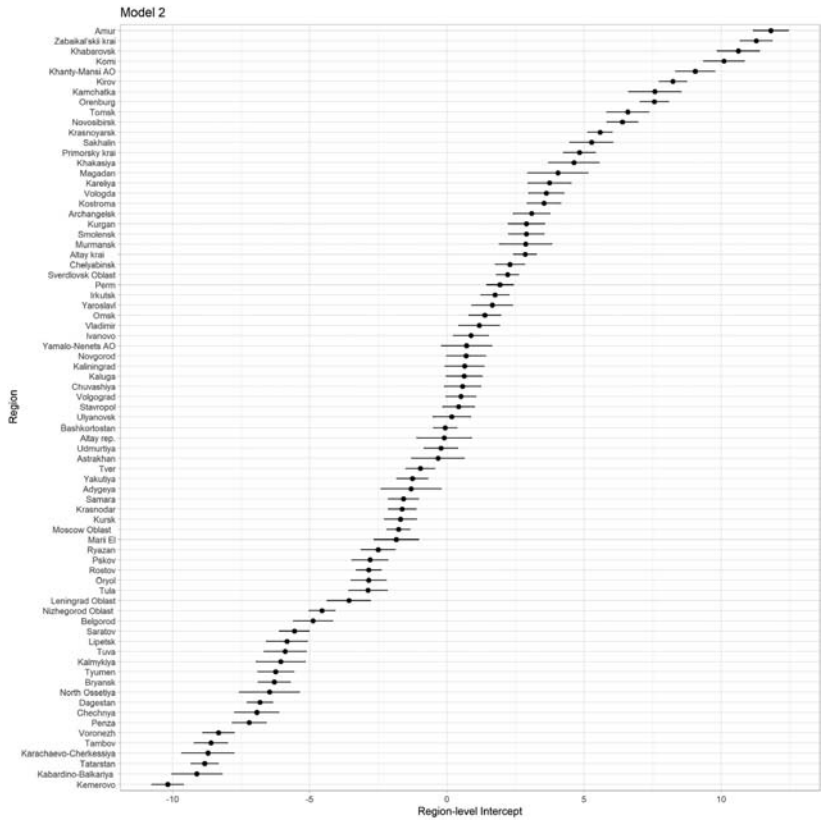


Figure 2. Voting for the LDPR: individual intercepts for the separate regions with 95% confidence intervals.

side (relatively low voting for the party), and to the right side (high voting). It is noteworthy, that the parties differ greatly in both the number of such ‘deviated regions’ and their lists.

The LDPR has the highest number of deviations in both sides, which once again proves that support for the LDPR is distributed more unevenly across the territory of the RF, than are the votes of the CPRF and the JR. As for the list of the ‘deviations’, on the left side, we have some regions that are common for all the opposition parties – Dagestan, Chechnya, Tuva, Tatarstan, Karachaevo-Cherkessiya, Kemerovo. This is not surprising, as all these are regions with strong authoritarian rule; and they ensure extra-ordinal voting for United Russia. At the same time, there are some important differences. Thus, the other authoritarian regions, North Ossetiya and Kabardino-Balkariya, are situated on the right side only in the plots of LDPR and JR, but they are on the left side in the CPRF’s plot. This means that the CPRF has relatively high levels of support in these regions.

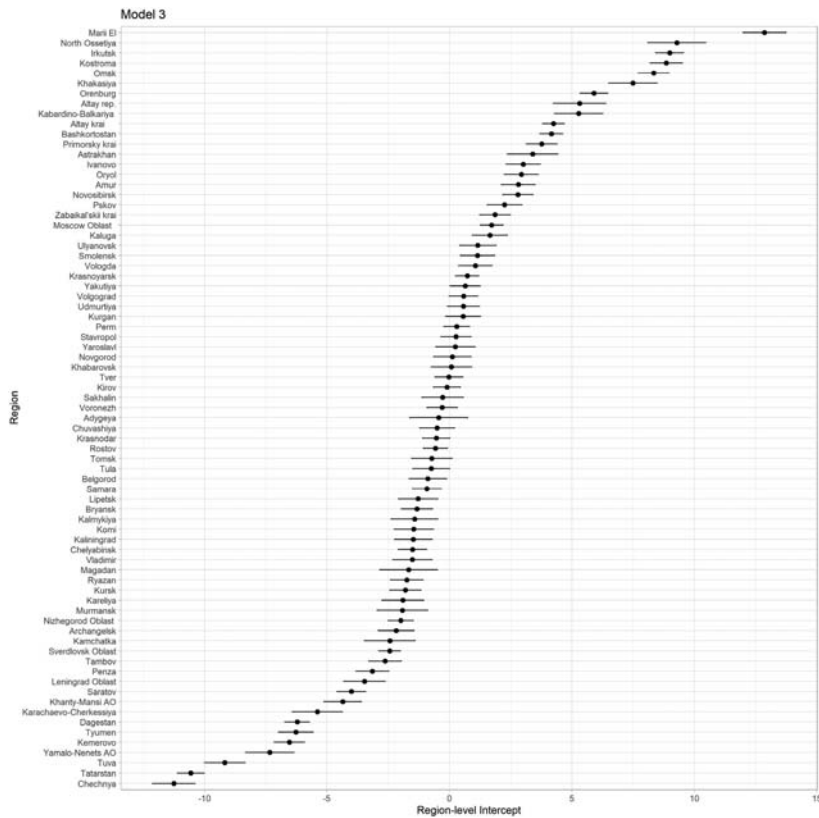


Figure 3. Voting for the CPRF: individual intercepts for the separate regions with 95% confidence intervals.

Moreover, on the right side of the 'deviations' (the most favourite regions for the parties) there are no coincidences at all. Each systemic opposition party has its 'own' most beneficial regions. For the LDPR, these are basically the Siberian and Far Eastern areas, such as Amur, Zabaykalskiy krai, Khabarovsk, etc. These regions are well known as the territories that consider themselves as 'outposts of Russia' and at the same time experience feelings of abandonment, and resentment towards Moscow. The recent history of the victory of the LDPR candidate Sergei Furgal in the Khabarovsk gubernatorial election, and the reaction to his subsequent arrest, demonstrate that the high results of the LDPR in these regions are not an accident.

The list of regions, where the CPRF has the highest levels of support, includes Irkutsk and Khakasiya. Again, these are the regions where the CPRF's candidates won the gubernatorial elections. The party is also popular in Marii El, Omsk, Orenburg, Altay republic, Kostroma, and, as noted above in North Ossetiya and Kabardino-Balkariya. Consequently, in contrast to the

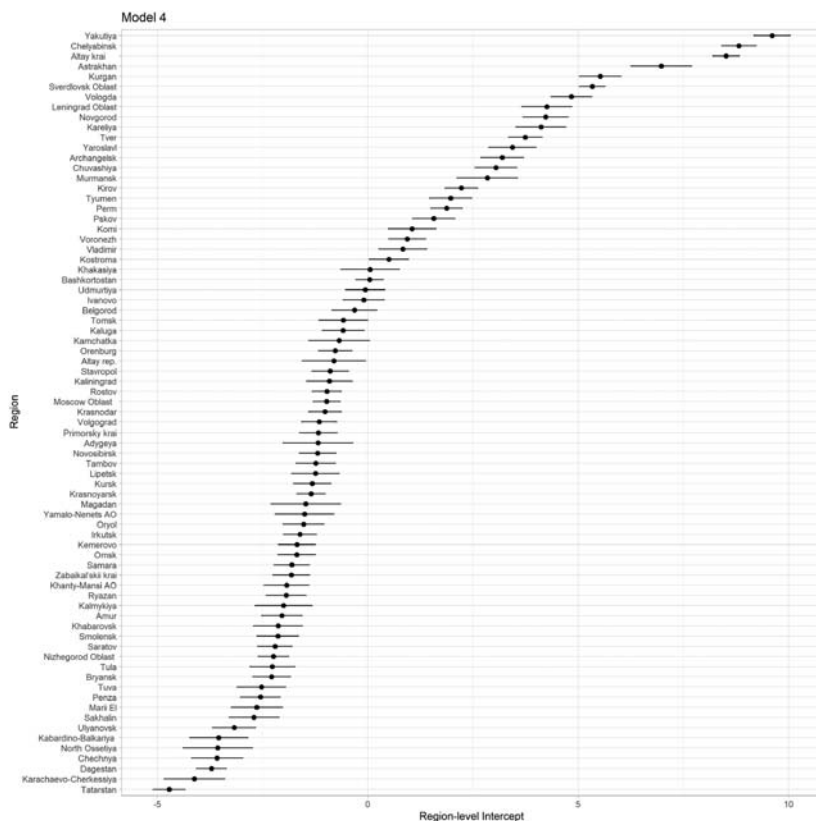


Figure 4. Voting for JR: individual intercepts for the separate regions with 95% confidence intervals.

LDPR, support for the CPRF is not localized geographically. It is possibly to explain such a dispersed distribution by the fact that the party has traditionally had fairly strong regional branches and personal leaders in these regions.

The same may be said for JR's 'favourable regions': Yakutiya, Chelyabinsk, Astrakhan, Altay krai, and Sverdlovsk Oblast. Support for JR in these areas is clearly grounded on the personal quality and popularity of its regional leaders: Oleg Shein in Astrakhan, Valerii Gartung in Chelyabinsk, Fedot Tumusov in Yakutiya, and so forth.

As there are high levels of cross-regional variations in voting for the systemic opposition parties, uncertainty arises as to whether regional differences have influenced our results. Therefore, to check the robustness of our inferences, we run our baseline models with some predictors concerning the regional level. We add such variables as 'Regional poverty' (the per cent of the population with incomes below the subsistence minimum in 2016), 'GRP per capita (log)', and 'Regional transfers' (the per cent of federal

Table 4. Robustness check: multi-level regression models with regional predictors ($N = 2209$).

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	OPP (1)	LD (2)	CP (3)	JR (4)
Non-Russians	−0.091*** (0.010)	−0.099*** (0.006)	−0.008 (0.006)	0.015*** (0.004)
Rural dwellers	−0.062*** (0.004)	−0.010*** (0.002)	−0.025*** (0.003)	−0.028*** (0.002)
Salary	0.007 (0.007)	0.006 (0.004)	−0.014*** (0.004)	0.015*** (0.003)
Employment	−0.049*** (0.011)	−0.012* (0.006)	−0.022*** (0.007)	−0.015*** (0.005)
Regional poverty	0.642* (0.261)	0.364** (0.147)	0.232* (0.125)	0.049 (0.096)
GRP per capita (log)	−0.093 (5.284)	6.723** (2.980)	−6.633* (2.593)	−0.128 (1.956)
Regional transfers	−0.278*** (0.085)	−0.106** (0.048)	−0.122*** (0.042)	−0.049 (0.032)
Constant	36.515 (30.941)	−22.684 (17.450)	52.809*** (15.183)	6.003 (11.455)
Random Effects				
σ^2	30.56	11.32	13.46	6.59
τ_{00}	13.40	23.24	17.26	9.90
ICC	0.71	0.67	0.56	0.60
Observations	2209	2209	2209	2209
Log Likelihood	−7075.323	−5979.776	−6154.399	−5373.977
Akaike Inf. Crit.	14,176.650	11,979.550	12,328.800	10,767.950
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	14,233.650	12,036.550	12,385.800	10,824.960
Marginal R^2 / Conditional R^2	0.268 / 0.755	0.336 / 0.752	0.103 / 0.607	0.094 / 0.635

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

non-repayable transfers in a unit's budget in 2016).⁵ The results of robustness check presented in Table 4 show that all the coefficients of the baseline models remain almost the same, which lends robustness to our findings.

Additionally, one can see that the level of poverty in the regions increases the voting for LDPR and CPRF, whereas the degree of financial dependence of regions from federal transfers decreases the voting for them. Both outcomes are in line with the 'authoritarian logic of voting'. Only Just Russia is out of step here, as the values of its coefficients are not statistically significant. Also, noteworthy, is the fact that the 'GRP per capita (log)' influences the voting for CPRF and LDPR in the opposite direction. Indeed, whilst LDPR is especially popular in Siberian and the Far Eastern regions, which are rich in minerals, and consequently have a high value of GRP per capita, the CPRF is supported more in the regions with weak economies.

Conclusion

Our analysis confirms the hypothesis, that in spite of the fact, that all three systemic opposition parties are 'pillars' of the regime, there are some

substantial differences between their supporters. The lower the level of well-being in an administrative unit is beneficial mostly for the CPRF. In contrast to the LDPR and JR, the CPRF is still conceived as a left-wing party which defends poor people. The LDPR is perceived as a rather right-wing party, clearly associated with identity politics and 'Russianess'; and it is the only systemic opposition party which is evidently supported in the units with lower shares of ethnic minorities. Our study also demonstrates, that besides the social and economic features of municipal units, cross-regional differences also have great importance. Liberal democrats are mostly supported in the Siberian and Far Eastern areas, where sentiments such as 'we are the outpost of Russia' are commonplace, and resentment towards Moscow is widespread. Cross-regional variations in voting for the Communist party are weaker and can be explained more by the quality of the party leadership and the party's historical roots. As for voting for JR, we find that the impact of the social and economic features of municipalities is rather blurred. Electoral support for Just Russia is grounded much more on the personal qualities of the party leaders in the administrative units.

Differences in voting for the three systemic opposition parties allows us to highlight the ways in which 'mobilized' and 'performance voting' relate to each other. Our study confirms a high degree of authoritarian mobilization that is facilitated by dense ethnic and rural networks and is more successful in poorer areas. At the same time, we find that a number of people cast their votes in response to the general economic dynamics in their administrative units. This point is in line with 'performance voting', i.e. voters blame the party of power for their poor conditions, both personal and social. Specifically, the lower the level of well-being in a unit, the more people vote for opposition parties, however not for the opposition in general, but for the CPRF. This confirms the fact that a significant part of the electorate, makes a choice between the opposition parties. As a result, the low level of well-being in a unit facilitates not only authoritarian mobilization in favour of UR, but also voting for the CPRF. Consequently, our study proves empirically that the two logics of voting do not contradict each other but are complementary.

Notes

1. Thus, for example, Hutcheson and McAllister (2017, 460) in their 2016 Survey found that just 27% of respondents, identified with a particular party. Likewise, Colton and Hale (2014, 16) in their 2012 Russian Election Studies Survey, found that approximately one third of the respondents could be defined as having, what they term a 'transitional partisanship' with UR. This is a much weaker and less stable relationship, than the classic form of party identification. For the opposition parties, just 3% were transitional partisans of JR and LDPR, and 9% held this weaker form of party identification for the CPRF.

2. We realize that these are not the only incentives. Some voters cast their votes on the basis of a fairly strong 'party identification', others may vote rationally and 'strategically', for instance, in the case of 'smart voting' promoted by Naval'nyi (Turchenko and Golosov 2021), and so forth. However, generally, for most ordinary voters, it appears to be reasonable to focus on their conventional and ordinal perceptions.
3. It should be noted that some of the official election results are falsified (Myagkov, Ordeshook, and Shakin 2009; Goodnow, Moser, and Smith 2014; Harvey 2016; Moser and White 2017; Saikkonen and White 2021). However, we have not been able to take this into account in this study as it is extremely difficult to measure the levels of fraud in all of the municipalities and to verify the accuracy of the results.
4. Besides municipal districts and city okrugs, there were also nearly 20,000 small municipalities of 'lower tire' (city settlements and rural settlements) that are parts of municipal districts.
5. All the data are extracted from: Regiony Rossii: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie Pokazateli 2019 (Moskva: Rosstat, 2019).

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